

SOUTHEND-ON-SEA CITY COUNCIL

Meeting of The Council

Date: Thursday, 19th October, 2023

Place: Council Chamber - Civic Suite

Present: Councillor S Habermel (Chair)
Councillors K Robinson, B Beggs, M Berry, M Borton, H Boyd, K Buck, S Buckley, L Burton, P Collins, J Courtenay, D Cowan, T Cowdrey, T Cox, M Davidson, A Dear, M Dent, F Evans, N Folkard, D Garston, S George, I Gilbert, J Harland, L Hyde, D Jarvis, A Jones, D Jones, J Lamb, R McMullan, J Moyies, C Mulrone, D Nelson, M O'Connor, M Sadza, M Terry, S Wakefield, N Ward, J Warren, P Wexham, R Woodley, S Ayles, C Campbell, O Carney, G Leroy, R Longstaff, C Nevin, D Richardson and K Murphy

Start/End Time: 6.30 pm - 11.00 pm

74 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Line, Stafford and Walker.

75 Declarations of Interest

The following declarations of interest were made:

All Councillors - Minute 82 (Review of Members' Allowances) – However, the Standards Committee on 11th July 2012 granted a dispensation to all Councillors to participate in the debate and vote on the matter (this was endorsed by Council on 19th July 2012).

76 Communications

(a) Sir David Amess – Minute's Silence

The Council remained silent for one minute as a mark of respect to Sir David Amess on the second anniversary of his tragic death.

(b) Southend United Football Club

The Mayor, on behalf of the Council, formally thanked the supporters and all those involved in securing and retaining the future of Southend United Football Club.

(c) Car Parking Charges

At the meeting of the Council held on 7th September 2023 Councillors received a minute of the Cabinet meeting held on 28th June concerning the removal of 6-9pm parking charges. This matter was deferred pending the receipt of legal advice.

The Mayor confirmed that the Council cannot determine car parking fees and charges as this is an Executive matter. Therefore, the deferred matter has been withdrawn.

77 Questions from Members of the Public

The relevant Cabinet Members responded to written questions received from the public.

78 Questions from Members of the Council

The relevant Cabinet Members responded to written and supplementary questions received from Councillors.

79 Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday, 7 September 2023

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday, 7 September 2023, be confirmed as a correct record and signed.

80 Leader of the Council - Update

The Leader of the Council addressed the Council and provided a brief overview of the work of the Cabinet. The Group Leaders and Councillors Aylen, Longstaff and Murphy responded.

81 Election Cycle Change Consultation

The Council considered a report of the Executive Director (Strategy and Change) seeking approval to launch a consultation to gauge public and stakeholder opinion on whether to move to an 'all out' electoral cycle or continue with election by thirds.

Resolved:

1. That an 8-week consultation be commenced with relevant stakeholders on a proposal to change the Council's scheme for elections by thirds to a scheme for whole Council 'all-out' elections.

2. That authority be delegated to the Executive Director (Strategy and Change), in consultation with the group leaders to agree the consultation approach and plan.

82 Review of Members' Allowances

The Council considered a report of the Executive Director (Strategy and Change) presenting the report and recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) on Members' Allowances for the Council.

Resolved:

That the following recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel, as set out in its report at Appendix 1 and summarised in the new Members' Allowances Scheme 2023-2027 at Appendix 2, be approved:

1. That the Basic Allowance be set at £10,400.
2. That the Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) summarised in the IRP report and the revised SRAs set out in the report, be approved.
3. That the allowances payable to the Independent Persons and the Co-opted Members, be approved.
4. That, subject to the introduction of a 5p per mile passenger supplement rate, the existing provisions in the Members' Allowances Scheme, regarding travelling and subsistence allowances, be reaffirmed.
5. That, subject to Booking Fee for claiming the Dependants' Carer's Allowance being increased to £15 and the maximum rate claimable for a special care allowance being set at the hourly rate charged by the Council for a Home Care Assistant, the existing provisions in the Members' Allowances Scheme regarding the Carers' Allowance, be reaffirmed.
6. That the following indices be applied to the remuneration and allowances paid to Members of the Council:
 - (a) Basic Allowance, Special Responsibility Co-optees and Independent Persons allowances to be indexed to the annual percentage salary increase for local government staff (at spinal point 43) to be implemented from the start of the municipal year, rather than the financial year, for which year it is applicable.
 - (b) Mileage allowances to be updated by reference to the rates which apply to Council officers (HMRC rates).
 - (c) Subsistence allowances to be updated by reference to the schemes which apply to Council officers.
 - (d) Basic 'sitters' allowance be linked to the National Living Wage. Specialist Care Allowance to be indexed to the hourly rate charged by the Council for a Home Care Assistant.
7. That the existing Members' Allowances Scheme be revoked and that, subject to the following amendment the new Members' Allowances Scheme 2023-2027, as set out in Appendix 2 to the submitted report, be approved with the implementation date being 1st August 2023:

Under the heading “Other Facilities” on page 5 of the scheme the first sentence of the second paragraph be deleted and replaced with the following text:

‘The Council also offers elected Councillors a free car parking permit for use when carrying out official Council duties across the city and can be used for parking in council operated car parks (including both the gated and general areas of Civic Underground) and on-street pay by phone/pay-and-display bays and residential permit parking bays.’

8. That the part year costs in 2023/24 of £33,000 resulting from the implementation of the recommendations of the IRP be funded from the Council’s contingency budget and that the full year cost of £50,000 be dealt with as part of the setting of the base budget for 2024/25.

83 Finance and Corporate Performance Report 2023/24 to end July 2023

The Council had before it Minute 36 of the Cabinet held on 18th September 2023 concerning the finance and corporate performance report 2023/24 to the end of July 2023 (period 4).

Resolved:

That Minute 36 (Recommendation 4) of the Cabinet, be approved.

84 Notice of Motion - Financial Affairs

During consideration of this matter an amendment was proposed by Councillor Cowan and seconded by Councillor Collins. The amendment was carried.

Resolved:

That the Notice of Motion concerning the financial situation at Southend-on-Sea City Council, as amended below, be referred to the Cabinet for consideration:

‘Under the last Joint Administration, their April 2022 – April 2023 budget was £6.835 Million overspent and a recent Cabinet paper reported that the budget that they set and voted for in February 2023 and came into effect from April 2023 is current running at a projected overspend of £14 Million with £13.4m of this sitting in Adult Social Care and Children’s Services.

It is currently the worst financial position that this Council has ever faced since it became a Unitary Authority in 1998, though the Council remains in a relatively financially resilient position.

This Council therefore:

- 1 Notes the last Joint Administration’s April 2022 – April 2023 budget was £6.835m overspent, this was reduced in-year from a projected £14.484m overspend.*
- 2 Notes that the last Joint Administration set and voted for the current budget in February 2023 and is running at a current year-end projected overspend of £14 Million, with £13.4m of this sitting in Adult Social Care and Children’s Services.*

- 3 *Notes that on 21st October 2022 the Chairman of the Local Government Association (LGA) and the leaders of all the political groups on the LGA wrote to the Chancellor regarding the tough financial positions facing local government due to short funding settlements and cost of adult social care.*
- 4 *Notes that independent national analysis suggests that as many as 1 in 6 local authorities could run out of money in 2023/24 without substantial additional funding.*
- 5 *Resolves that the Council takes appropriate measures to reduce the current deficit by working cross-party to determine and realise savings, build upon 'The Dozen Principles' as instigated by the Section 151 Officer, to address and reduce the deficit in 2022/2023 as well as instruct the Leaders of all the Groups to urgently write to the Prime Minister, Chancellor, and Secretary of State for Local Government asking that Government recognises that even with drastic cuts, local councils are struggling to afford statutory services and resolves to put local councils on a long-term sustainable financial footing by providing:*
 - *Funding that keeps pace with the growing demand for adults and children's services*
 - *Fully funding social care*
 - *Properly funding Special Educational Needs provisions*

85 Notice of Motion - Improving Cuckoo Corner

The Notice of Motion concerning improvements to Cuckoo Corner was deferred to the next meeting of Council.

86 Appointments to Committees, etc

Resolved:

That it be noted that Councillor Alan Dear will replace Councillor Walker on the Licensing Sub-Committee C and be appointed Chair of the Committee.

Chair: _____